

Excerpt from Gary DeLashmutt’s “Discipleship Workshop”

Commit to time together that is regular, personal and intentional:

“**Regular**” means weekly unless really not feasible. (I find that when I meet with someone bi-weekly, it is difficult to really progress relationally and/or developmentally.) It also means that you don’t miss except for out of town and/or emergencies—and that even then you try to find a way to meet. If you let an “It’s OK to cancel” ethic happen, you’re done. It also means (preferably) the same time and the same place. It also means at least an hour (I vastly prefer two hours) for the personal and intentional (see below). And it means that you will probably be doing this for years rather than weeks or months.

“**Personal**” means that we build a real Christ-centered friendship—that we practice real transparency with one another, by encouraging one another and showing affection to one another, and by confessing our sins and fears and bearing one another’s burdens as needed. That’s why we need to keep it at two or at most three people. Of course, we will want to relate in this way outside our time together—but we need to be sure that we express this appropriately during our regular meetings.

“**Intentional**” means that we are trying to foster genuine spiritual growth in one another’s lives. It is usually easier to be intentional in mentoring discipleship – but it is equally important in peer discipleship (see below). What does “intentional” look like?

Use a “flexible framework” to facilitate intentionality in your time together.

We need a biblical *framework* for using this time intentionally, or we may wander into superficial “hanging out,” being imbalanced, etc. But we also need to have *flexibility* to respond to “real time” growth opportunities.

The *framework* is the 4 key areas of spiritual development that we have talked about for years:

<p style="text-align: center;">STUDY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Bible• quality Christian books• quality recorded teachings	<p style="text-align: center;">COUNSEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• key relationships• besetting sins• fears, doubts, etc.
<p style="text-align: center;">COACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• evangelism & follow-up• discipleship• spiritual gifts & other roles	<p style="text-align: center;">PRAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• together & out loud• for one another & others

So in a typical time together, we spend some time catching up on recent personal or ministry developments. Maybe we pray briefly before we study. Then we spend some time reading and discussing either a Bible passage or a quality Christian book. This discussion often leads us into character and/or ministry applications—or we bring them up as needed. Then we spend some time thanking God for our time together, praying for one another, the people we’re ministering to (inside & outside the home group), etc.

The *flexibility* comes in not only in minor changes to the above format—but also in major deviations in order to make the most of “real time” situations.

- Maybe a *moral issue* has come up that you need to address for the whole time, and even in subsequent meetings until it gets resolved.
- Maybe a *ministry situation* has come up that you need to discuss and pray about for most of your time.
- Maybe a *personal need* comes up that you need to share or minister to for most of your time.
- Maybe a *timely challenge* needs to be issued, so you let this take priority.
- Maybe a *relational issue* between you needs to be thoroughly discussed during your time together.
- Maybe you should *take a class together* (but don’t neglect the other 3 areas somehow!)

“When do you stay with the usual format, and when do you deviate from it?” This a Spirit-led judgment call. But consider:

Lean against your tendency (too rigid?/too loose?), and against “specializing” in your strength.

Be sure that you have a STUDY plan (and that you don’t wander from it), and that you always PRAY.

The goal is that we want to *make progress* in all 4 areas over a long period of time (cf. 1 Tim. 4:15).